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The Effects of Speaking Anxiety on Foreign Language Learning

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The Effects of Speaking Anxiety on Foreign Language Learning

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Dedication

To my parents,

who have always been there for me.

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Abstract

The Effects of Speaking Anxiety on Foreign Language Learning

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2009

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The purpose of this paper is to examine in depth and to synthesize the literature on foreign language anxiety, with specific focus on speaking anxiety. This paper reviews the development of the foreign language anxiety construct and extensive research on its relationship with other domains of second language acquisition, including specific language skills and language learning processes. Review of the literature has confirmed that foreign language anxiety plays a significant role in learners' performance and achievement. However, there are still many areas that need further research and clarification. Variables such as individual differences still cloud the relationship between anxiety and achievement, thus suggesting that further research should be conducted in order to clarify the effects of foreign language anxiety and should strive to alleviate learners' anxiety in the language classroom.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The fear of speaking a foreign language is really painful, isn't it?

Do you lose control over your body?

Dry mouth? Quivering voice?

Sweating? Increased heart rate?

Do you require preparation before you can talk before a group?

Does your fear of speaking prevent you from asking questions in class?

Do you worry about sounding foolish and having your classmates laugh at you?

For many students, language courses are the most anxiety-provoking courses that they take (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Macintyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991). For this reason, foreign language anxiety has been subject to a great deal of research for the past couple of decades. With increasing concern over facilitating optimal methodologies for second or foreign language learners' achievement, scholars have tried to identify affective variables that have negative influence on language performance, and numerous studies have presented sufficient empirical data to support the debilitating effect of foreign language anxiety on the language learning process. Young (1991) asserts through her review of the literature that only recently have researchers viewed anxiety as a unique phenomenon particular to language learning. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) were the first to theorize this concept, and MacIntyre and Gardner's studies (Macintyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991) support

their theory. Also, she mentions that recent studies have examined both students' and instructors' perspectives on anxiety, providing insight into the foreign language anxiety in further detail.

This paper seeks to provide a systematical review the literature on foreign language anxiety. Of the four anxiety types: Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing anxieties, speaking anxiety was reviewed and discussed in particular, followed by suggestions for strategies and remedies that may relieve learners of this "emotional burden".

Many students feel tenser and more nervous in a foreign language class than in any other class (Campbell & Ortiz, 1991; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989), and their anxiety seems to come predominantly from the speaking situation in class (E. K. Horwitz et al., 1986; Koch & Terrell, 1991; Price, 1991; Young, 1990), hence providing motivation for this report.

Difficulty in speaking in class is probably the most frequently cited concern of the anxious students (Horwitz, et al., 1986). Because speaking has been identified as the most anxiety-provoking skill, foreign language speaking anxiety and its characteristics represent especially promising areas of research. Studies have revealed that foreign language anxiety exists in almost every aspect of L2/FL learning, and that much of the anxiety is associated with understanding and speaking the target language. Speaking publicly in the target language is particularly anxiety provoking for many students, even those who feel little stress in other aspects of language learning (Horwitz, 1995). Anxious students are less likely to volunteer answers or to participate in oral classroom activities (Ely, 1986). They also engage in such behavior

as skipping classes and postponing their homework (Argaman & Abu-Rabia, 2002, as cited in Liu & Jackson, 2008).

CHAPTER 2

Overview of Research on Foreign Language Anxiety

Before the term "foreign language anxiety" was introduced, the construct of general anxiety had been used in the field of second language acquisition. In early research on language anxiety, scholars had examined the effects of anxiety on language learning and performance, hypothesizing that anxiety has a negative influence on learner's performance. However, early studies were unable to establish a "clear-cut relationship between anxiety and overall foreign language achievement." (Scovel, 1978) Results of the studies conducted at the time had produced contradictory results, specifically with regards to the assumption regarding the negative influence of anxiety, since some studies indicated that the relationship between anxiety and language performance was not necessarily negative. (Scovel, 1978) In fact, there were studies that found anxiety may have a positive effect on a second language learner's performance (Chastain, 1975; Kleinmann, 1977, as cited in Horwitz, 2001).

According to Scovel, in previous research the reasons for inconsistent results were due to problematic definitions of anxiety, the lack of a reliable and valid anxiety measure specifically geared to foreign language learning (Horwitz, et al., 1986; Yan & Horwitz, 2008), and the lack of studies on the subtle effects of anxiety. In addition, lack of attention to the type of anxiety involved in foreign language contributed to the inconsistent results (Scovel, 1978).

Indentified as "too specific to be captured by general anxiety measures"

(MacIntyre and Gardner 1989, 1991), the concept of foreign language anxiety was introduced by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986). According to them, foreign language anxiety is a situation-specific anxiety, a unique type of reaction exclusive in foreign language learning situations. It is also "a distinct set of beliefs, self-perceptions, and feelings and behaviors relating to the classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process, and not merely a composite of other anxieties" (Horwitz *et al*. 1986; Horwitz 1986).

MacIntyre and Gardner also defined foreign language anxiety as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language/foreign language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Accordingly, FL anxiety has been identified as one of the major obstacles to acquisition and to fluent production of foreign languages (Dewaele, Petrides, & Furnham, 2008).

In response to the lack of consistent measurements of foreign language anxiety, Horwitz *et al.* developed a scale**,** namely, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, which will be discussed in the following section. Such accomplishment propelled scholars to turn to anxiety as a new focus of research in second language acquisition (Young, 1990; Young, 1991). It is now acknowledged that "foreign language anxiety negatively affects foreign language achievement" (Proulx, 1991; Young, 1991), and research that has focused specifically on the construct of language anxiety (Aida, 1994; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991; Liu, 1989; Philips, 1992; Saito & Samimy, 1996, as cited in Horwitz, 2008) has found a consistent inverse relationship between anxiety and second language achievement

(Horwitz, 2001, as cited in Horwitz, 2008), thus lending firm support to the role of affective variables in language learning and achievement.

Horwitz et al. (1986) concluded that "intense anxiety not only results in underperformance, but also leads to avoiding learning foreign language altogether". MacIntyre (1995) supports this view that anxiety can influence the "quality of performance" by arguing that "worrying" i.e. having cognitive concern results in divided attention which distracts the learner from focusing on the task-relevant information, consequently leading to poor performance. They acknowledge it as a causal factor although many variables such as learner characteristics, including affective variables, are synthesized to somewhat obscure the exact role and the degree to which anxiety affects learners' performances. Phillips' (1992) view has some overlap in that although she concluded that "language anxiety explains a small part of a very complex picture" and remains unsure about the debilitating impact of anxiety, she still agreed that anxiety contributes significantly to students' attitudes towards language learning and their motivation to continue studying beyond the required amount. This impact on learners' attitudes, as contended by many scholars, ultimately has a potential effect on the learners' performance. Another study by Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) on correlation between perfectionism and anxiety revealed that perfectionism is tightly linked with language anxiety as they share many characteristics, and as perfectionism has been proven to be counterproductive, anxious students with such characteristics may be less successful in achieving language proficiency.

There are some scholars who hold opposing views on the role of anxiety.

Sparks and Ganschow (1996) asserted that foreign language anxiety is a consequence of language learning problems, which are attributed to variables such as individual differences in native language skills, foreign language aptitude, and other basic language skills. This implies that good native language skills mean better achievement in foreign language classes, and this aptitude in language would lead to having low anxiety. Their comment that "confounding variables such as participants' basic language skills should be ruled out and controlled in future studies in order to verify the exact effect of anxiety on performance and foreign language achievement" is acknowledged. Nonetheless, their general argument and their disregard for affective factors such as anxiety was widely criticized and contradicted by other scholars with empirical data (Horwitz, 2000; Macintyre, 1995).

The subtle nature of foreign language anxiety stimulated many studies to attempt to clarify its relationship with many variables and ultimately with performance. Scholars such as MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, and Daley (2000) examined the effects of anxiety on the three stages of language learning i.e. input, processing, and output, and its influence on overall achievement. They concluded that a high level of anxiety can have detrimental effects by inhibiting the cognitive process such as taking in, processing, and retrieving information as well as performance. This view is shared by many scholars.

However, MacIntyre and Gardner's (1994) further conclusion that students who are highly anxious may have "a smaller base of second/foreign language knowledge and have more difficulty demonstrating the knowledge that they do possess" contradicted the opinions of some scholars such as Horwitz et al. (1986).

MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) appear to have over-generalized the competence of anxious students. Anxiety does indeed inhibit performance, yet this does not necessarily imply poorer cognitive ability and thus whether anxious students have a smaller knowledge base in foreign language is a matter that requires cautious approach. Horwitz et al. (1986) conceive that even advanced students can have high level of anxiety, which is empirically supported.

In relation to learner characteristics, Horwitz et al. (1986) commented that anxiety is a "distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process". Most scholars agree that learners' self-perception has significant impact on anxiety, and consequently on achievement and performance. Young (1991) supports this view by asserting that students with low self-esteem and self-perceived low ability are the most likely subjects of foreign language anxiety. Likewise, the study conducted by Kitano (2001) revealed that the anxiety level of advanced students was more strongly affected by fear of negative evaluation than that of lower levels of proficiency. Also, he agreed that the level of anxiety is affected by the learners' self-perception of their speaking ability, and that constant comparison with the peers in the classroom affects their self-perception. Gregersen and Horwitz's study (2002) mentioned above also shares this view by suggesting that learners' affective characteristics such as low self-perception and fear of negative evaluation contribute significantly to their level of anxiety.

Many scholars have also examined foreign language anxiety related to specific language skills, and have discovered that although there is a strong positive

correlation between global FL anxiety and specific skill anxiety, they can be separated as distinctive constructs. Elkhafaifi (2005) supported this view based on his findings that the general FL anxiety and listening anxiety showed a correlation coefficient of .66, indicating that approximately 56% of the variance was not common to the measures.

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

Emerging from the research conducted by Horwitz et al. in 1986 was the thirty-three item Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), a tool to measure levels of foreign language anxiety. Using this scale, the authors found a negative relationship between anxiety and classroom performance, and drew the conclusion that there is a commonality among anxious students learning a foreign language (Horwitz et al., 1986). This scale has been found to be reliable and valid (Aida 1994; Cheng, Horwitz and Schallert 1999, as cited in Woodrow 2006). The FLCAS has gained widespread popularity in later research studies on language learning situations (Aida, 1994; Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999; Kitano, 2001; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey & Daley, 1999; Phillips, 1992; Saito & Samimy, 1996; Wang & Ding, 2001; Yan & Wang, 2001).

CHAPTER 3

Types of Foreign Language Anxiety

In order to explain the concept of foreign language anxiety, Horwitz et al. (1986) drew parallels between it and three related performance anxieties: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

Communication Apprehension

While early research focused on communication apprehension in terms of public speaking (Lomas, 1937, as cited in Francis & Miller 2008), subsequent research has illustrated the utility of this construct in understanding multiple communication contexts and experiences (Daly, 1978; McCroskey & Beatty, 1984; Toale & McCroskey, 2001, as cited in Francis & Miller 2008). Although many related constructs exist such as shyness, reticence, and willingness to communicate, communication apprehension is the most relevant construct to the language learning context.

Communication apprehension has been defined as ‘‘an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons’’ (McCroskey, 1977), or “a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people” (McCroskey, 1977, as cited in Horwitz et al., 1986).

Regarding the effects of communication apprehension, Daly and McCroskey

stated that conducting a speech in front of people can strongly stir feelings of fear and apprehension (Daly and Stafford, 1984; McCroskey, 1974, as cited in Young, 1990). People who typically have trouble speaking in groups are likely to experience even greater difficulty speaking in an foreign language class, where they have little control over the communicative situation and where their performance is constantly monitored.

Communication apprehension has been found to have a debilitating effect in that it often entails unwillingness to communicate, less risk-taking (Liu & Jackson, 2008), and reticence (Kelly, 1982), which all hinder successful performance. Regarding communication apprehension, Burgoon had also proposed that "individuals with communication reticence exhibit the predisposition of unwillingness to communicate", which stems from a variety of causes, some of which were mentioned by Young above, such as apprehension, low self-esteem, lack of communicative competence, anomie, alienation, and introversion (Burgoon, 1976).

McCroskey (1977) offered the concept of communication apprehension as a subset of reticence. According to McCroskey, people who experience a high level of communication apprehension "withdraw from and seek to avoid communication when possible". Introverted and reserved people tend to be quieter and less willing to communicate (McCroskey, 1997).

As Young suggests, having low self-esteem can also entail a higher level of anxiety towards learning the target language than that of a learner with high self-esteem. Other factors of speaking anxiety may be the difficulty or the type of activities. Foreign language learners are more likely to be nervous if the given

activities are perceived as beyond their level of proficiency, or if the activities are to be carried out on their own, putting them under the spotlight, another cause of fear of negative evaluation. Other factors may be the "level of in-class assignment, types of topics which might lead language learners to participate fully according to their interests, language learners' self-comfortability, and the language instructor's attitude toward language learners" (Young, 1990).

Phillips (1992) also acknowledges the debilitating impact on learner's performance, especially on oral productions. In her study that specifically focuses on the effects of students' anxiety on performance on an oral test, she discovered that there was a negative correlation between anxiety and achievement on the oral test (Phillips, 1992). Also, students with low anxiety tended to produce longer communication units with more dependent clauses and target structures. In other words, they generally produced speech of higher quality than moderate and high anxiety students. Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner discovered that anxious students needed to study longer and make more effort in order to perform at the similar level as the more relaxed students, and appeared less expressive and less fluent (Macintyre & Gardner, 1994). This implies that anxiety contributes significantly in that it has a direct influence on students' attitudes towards language learning, on their overall performance, and on their willingness to continue studying beyond the required amount.

Oral communication apprehension can impede a person's willingness and ability to communicate and, as a result, can diminish the opportunity for communication-skills development (Daly et al., 1997; McCroskey, 1983). Individuals

with high communication apprehension are more likely to avoid communication situations such as public speaking classes, rather than take part in such situations as active communicators (McCroskey, 1977). Individuals with low communication apprehension, conversely, are more likely to communicate and to possess the internal drive and external opportunity needed to improve ability (Daly, et al., 1977).

Communication apprehension may not only adversely affect one's overall academic performance, but it can also be a crippling factor in an one's daily life, posing a barrier to work opportunities, social interactions, and even personality development (Horwitz and Young, 1991).

Test- Anxiety

Another type of anxiety related to foreign language anxiety is test anxiety (Horwitz, et al., 1986). Test anxiety is defined as "a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure" (Gordon and Sarason, 1955; Sarason, 1980, as cited in Horwitz et al., 1986). Learners with test anxiety often demand more of themselves than they are capable of achieving and worry about their performance. Research on test anxiety suggests that anxiety can affect an individual's performance both positively and negatively (Alpert & Haber; Benton; Daly and Stafford; McCroskey; Pimsleur; Spielberger; Verma as cited in Young, 1986), and some research indicates that an individual's objectively measured ability to perform the task at hand can determine the effect of anxiety on performance (Young, 1986). Such findings indicate that while learners with "adequate capacity to perform the tasks" are not affected by anxiety on performance, learners with low ability can be subject to the interference of anxiety in

all controlled and reinforced conditions.

Test anxiety must be taken seriously in the ESL/EFL context in that foreign language learners might be particularly susceptible to this form of anxiety (Young, 1991).

Fear of Negative Evaluation

The third type of anxiety related to foreign language anxiety is fear of negative evaluation. Fear of negative evaluation involves "apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (Watson & Friend, 1969, as cited in Horwitz et al., 1986). Like individuals with communication apprehension, people who fear negative evaluation rarely initiate conversation and interact minimally (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). In the language classroom context, students who experience this anxiety "tend to sit passively in the classroom, withdraw from activities that could increase their language skills, and may even avoid class entirely" (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002).

Fear of negative evaluation may be the most debilitating factor in improving language competence and performance in that learners with such characteristics tend to be passive. Passivism results in less opportunity to communicate in class, and to interact with the teacher to fully grasp the content. The major concern is that the nature of the foreign language classroom makes the presence of fear of negative evaluation inevitable, in which learners are "constantly evaluated by the teacher and possibly the peers" (Horwitz, et al., 1986). Instead of participating in communication activities, those learners merely resort to listening because they are afraid of being

looked upon unfavorably by their peers, whether such negative "looks" are real or imagined (Leary, 1983), and their fear of making mistakes in front of their classmates inhibit students from participating (Young, 1990). In addition, Kitano found that the anxiety level of advanced students was more strongly affected by fear of negative evaluation than that of lower levels of proficiency (Kitano, 2001), which implies that fear of negative evaluation does not depend on language proficiency.

Although communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation construct the foundation and provide better understanding for the concept of foreign language anxiety, the these anxieties cannot solely explain its complex and ambiguous nature. Rather, it must be acknowledged that foreign language is "a distinct set of beliefs, self-perceptions, and feelings and behaviors relating to the classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz, et al., 1986).

CHAPTER 4

Sources and Effects of Foreign Language Anxiety

Sources of Foreign language anxiety

In order to fully understand the construct of foreign language anxiety, and to provide anxious learners with effective strategies to overcome it, sources of FL anxiety must first be investigated.

Six potential sources of anxiety in the classroom have been identifed by Young (1991): personal and interpersonal anxieties (e.g., self-esteem, communication apprehension); learner beliefs; instructor beliefs; instructor-learner interactions (e.g., teachers' harsh manner of correcting student mistakes); classroom procedures (e.g., speaking in front of peers); and language testing. Among the six potential sources, Young states that personal and interpersonal anxieties have been the most commonly discussed in many anxiety studies.

Young examined studies by other scholars such as Baily (1983) who agree that students with low self esteem and self-perceived low ability are the most likely subjects of foreign language anxiety. Anxiety is also related to confidence and self-esteem (Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Mak & White, 1997), attitudes toward errors and mistakes (Mak & White, 1997), classroom behavior (Hilleson, 1996; Jackson, 2002; Tsui, 1996), attitude and motivation (Clément et al., 1994; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995), and personality (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995).

Also, defining language anxiety as a social anxiety (Leary, 1982) provides further understanding. Gynan (Gynan, 1989, as cited in Young, 1991; and Horwitz's (Horwitz, 1988, as cited in Young, 1991) studies have suggested that unrealistic learner beliefs could lead to anxiety, and that "when beliefs and reality clash, anxiety results". Young (1991) reviewed Brandl's (1987, as cited in Young) article to synthesize that different beliefs of instructors, and how they set up the classroom has much impact on students' anxieties. On anxieties provoked by instructor-learner interaction, many scholars such as Horwitz et al., Koch and Terrell, Price, and Young (as cited in Horwitz & Young 1991) have found that having to speak in front of a group in the classroom is the primary cause of anxiety. Finally, Young cites Madsen et al. and Daly from Horwitz & Young (1991) to suggest that "the greater the degree of student evaluation and the more unfamiliar the test tasks and formats, the more the learner experiences anxiety". These six sources of anxiety can be interrelated with MacIntyre and Gardener's theory that language anxiety is the result of repeated state anxiety situations in the language learning context, not due to innate trait anxiety. With regard to this connection, Young suggests that the main source of learners' anxiety in language learning may be the problems in teaching methodologies in language classrooms. In other words, she hypothesizes that it may not be the individual characteristics of the students that mainly determine their level of anxiety, but rather their experiences in the language classrooms.

Similarly, Kitano (2001) also focuses on the sources of anxiety in the FL classroom, in the Japanese classroom setting. Investigating 2 potential sources in specific: fear of negative evaluation as a personality trait, and individual's self-

perceived speaking ability in the target language, Kitano hypothesized that students with a fear of negative evaluation are the most likely candidates for having anxiety (Horwitz et al. 1986). This phenomenon also applies to students with low self-perceived speaking abilities (Young 1991). Kitano found that the anxiety level of advanced students was more strongly affected by fear of negative evaluation than that of lower levels of proficiency. He suggested that advanced students are more likely to notice their own errors, which possibly clashes with their high expectations and thus more vulnerable to negative emotions such as shame or embarrassment (Kitano, 2001). It may also be that the teachers have harsher attitudes towards advanced students.

Another interesting finding was that students who had spent time in Japan had more anxiety influenced by fear of negative evaluation. Kitano viewed this phenomenon as a result of pressure to "fulfill" others' expectations and their image of being the more proficient students because of their experience in the target country (Kitano, 2001).

With regard to self-perception, Kitano concluded that the level of anxiety is indeed affected by the learners' self-perception of their speaking ability, and that the nature of the classroom environment possibly makes in inevitable for students to compare themselves with peers. Constant comparison with the peers affects their self-perception.

Self-perception and its influence on anxiety were also examined by Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, and Daley (2000). Bailey et al. had sought to identify a "combination of variables" that might be correlated with anxiety at the Input, Processing, and Output stages of the language learning process, based on MacIntyre (1999), Gardner

(1985) and Tobias' (1986) views that anxiety hinders or impedes learners' abilities at all three stages causing underachievement and that the three stages of anxiety are "somewhat interdependent",

Their study of 205 students of various levels enrolled in 3 different foreign language courses revealed that despite its neglect in previous measures of anxiety, processing anxiety was the major contributor to the global FL anxiety, followed by Output anxiety. With regard to the study's main interest, it was found that students with the highest levels of anxiety at the three stages tended to be older, have lower expectations of their achievement, lower perceived global self-worth, lower perceived competence, lower perceived intellectual ability, lower perceived job competence, and fewer prior FL experience. Their finding that age is related to levels of anxiety is consistent with the results of other studies (Horwitz, et al., 1986; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999).

All of these variables except for intellectual ability showed significant correlation with anxiety at the three stages, thus confirming the relationship of anxiety and learners' self-perception. Among these variables expectation of FL achievement had the largest relationship, serving as "the biggest predictor of global FL anxiety", and this is consistent with views that learners' beliefs (Horwitz 1984, 1988) and negative expectations (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991) lead to anxiety.

Setting unrealistic goals or standards of language performance and proficiency for learners themselves may also affect the levels of anxiety. In their investigation of the relationship between foreign language anxiety and perfectionism, Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) discovered that anxious students also manifested signs

of perfectionism. Of the eight Chilean students that participated, four were anxious, and Gregersen et al. concluded that foreign language anxiety and perfectionism share several characteristics, in that all four anxious participants manifested signs of perfectionism as defined by Brophy (1999): Unusually high performance standards, procrastination, negative self-evaluation as well as fear of evaluation, concern over errors etc., which were not shown in the non-anxious participants. Gregersen et al. discovered that some of the highly anxious students were dissatisfied with their performance, despite their high level of English proficiency. Moreover, although both the anxious and non-anxious groups were aware of their errors or their performance level, they differed in emotions and perceptions concerning these issues. Furthermore, the finding that anxious students continuously noticed and negatively commented on their mistakes and imperfect performances, which was a tendency not found in the non-anxious students, implies that they have much higher standards and goals. This lends support to the view that unrealistic and harsh goals and standards have influence on anxiety.

Effects of Foreign language anxiety

Anxiety seems to have different effects on the learning of different language components: that is, speaking, listening, reading, or writing (Cook, 2001). With regard to the effects of anxiety, clinical experience has suggested problems caused by foreign language anxiety, especially in listening and speaking, in spontaneous or test situations. Studies have discovered that language learners become most highly anxious when faced with tasks involving oral performance in a target language

(Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1990). Horwitz et al. (1986) contend that the most anxiety-provoking skill is not only speaking but also listening in that both require a language learner to assume an interactive role. Between the two, speaking is known to cause more anxiety, and many researchers have commented that oral performance , oral performance evaluation, or speaking in front of an audience are the most anxiety-inducing situations in language classes (Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1990; Young, Krashen, Hadley, Terrell, & Rardin, 1992; Frantze & Magnan, 2005).

Symptoms of foreign language anxiety include underperforming, having difficulty in comprehension, forgetting things that they already know, making careless errors, over-studying, and avoiding class. In addition to these symptoms, studies have revealed that learner's beliefs about language learning provoke anxiety that impedes performance and ultimately achievement of fluency in a foreign language. Furthermore, these factors could lead to false evaluation of anxious students by teachers, for assessment in general relies on performance. In relation to evaluation, three performance-related anxieties are explained with regard to foreign language anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, as discussed above. Although these provide better understanding of the subtleties of foreign language anxiety, anxiety is still a "distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz, et al., 1986). Foreign language anxiety is a serious issue that cannot be neglected, for having intense anxiety not only results in "poor" performance due to its counterproductive nature, but also leads to avoiding learning foreign language altogether.

CHAPTER 5

Other constructs related to Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety and unwillingness to communicate are tightly related, in that anxiety is indicated as the major reason that learners are reluctant to speak in class and prefer to avoid communication situations if possible. Burgoon (1976) lends support to this view by stating that "individuals with communication reticence exhibit the predisposition of unwillingness to communicate". Furthermore, Liu marks anxiety as one of the sources for unwillingness to communicate, other than low self-esteem, lack of communicative competence, and introversion. (Liu & Jackson, 2008) Therefore, it seems logical that the concept of unwillingness to communicate be examined in detail in order to understand foreign language anxiety in depth.

Unwillingness to communicate

Many qualitative studies have suggested that unwillingness to communicate and anxiety affect each other in second or foreign language learning. As a result of anxiety, ESL or ESL students often choose to remain silent and are unwilling or less willing than non-anxious students to participate in speech communication in class (Liu & Jackson, 2008). Consequently, their silence and unwillingness to speak the language in class render them even more anxious (Hilleson, 1996; Jackson, 2002; Liu, 2006; Tsui, 1996).

Regarding unwillingness to communicate, Liu and Jackson (2008) sought to

explore the realm of students' unwillingness and foreign language anxiety. In their investigation of Chinese EFL classrooms, they discovered that one-third of the students were anxious, and that students who were less willing to participate and had a negative opinion of oral communication were more fearful of negative evaluation and were apprehensive about public speaking and tests. (Liu & Jackson, 2008) In addition, they found that students who were unwilling to participate had a tendency to be less sociable and less risk-taking, and that the more sociable or risk-taking the learner, the higher their self-rating of English proficiency. Although a learner may be willing to engage in interpersonal communication, their anxiety would inhibit their participation by refusing to take risks in the English classroom.

The results in Liu and Jackson's study which revealed that older students tended to be less willing, less risk-taking and more anxious in the EFL classroom suggested that the age factor may also contribute to speaking anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986) argue that adults are especially vulnerable to anxiety in foreign language learning, because unlike in a native language situation lack of ability to express in a foreign language challenges their self-concept as a competent communicator and damages their self-esteem. (Horwitz, et al., 1986)

After administering the FLCAS and other measures to 210 students in a U.S. university, Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999) also determined that FL anxiety correlated positively with age (Onwuegbuzie, et al., 1999).

Therefore, it is entirely possible that an anxious adult foreign language learner avoids speaking spontaneously, especially in the classroom, feeling that they would not be able to express themselves exactly how they intended it, or that they

would make errors. For anxious learners, speaking requires much preparation and cognitive process in advance. Because complex and non-spontaneous mental operations are required to communicate, "any performance in the L2 is likely to challenge an individual's self-concept as a competent communicator and lead to reticence, self-consciousness, fear, or even panic" (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Reticence

Communication apprehension and unwillingness to communicate both relate to the larger construct of reticence. Participants with high levels of communication apprehension have a marked tendency to avoid public speaking, whereas people with low levels of communication apprehension demonstrate the opposite tendency (Burgoon, 1976; McCroskey, 1991; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). Phillips defined reticence as a problem of inadequate communication skills.

Public Speaking Anxiety

Speaking publicly in the target language is particularly anxiety provoking for many students, even those who feel little stress in other aspects of language learning (Horwitz, 1995). Because communication apprehension is related to the construct of public speaking anxiety, it may be useful to mention some overlapping concepts and strategies that are used for overcoming public speaking anxiety.

Anxiety about speaking in public is one of the most common fears reported by adults and young adults. Public speaking is one of the most feared context-based apprehensions (Pribyl, Keaten, Sakamoto, 2001). Nishida (1988) noted that Japanese

females report higher levels of anxiety in the public speaking context, a result replicated by Pribyl et al. (1998). While some degree of anxiety is a normal and expected part of public speaking, presenting or otherwise "performing" in public, for many the anxiety is so intense that it interferes with their ability to function.

There are many ways that social or performance anxiety can limit a person's activities and interfere with daily life. Individuals who experience performance anxiety may avoid certain social gatherings, avoid enrolling in certain classes because of course demands for class participation and oral presentations, and/or they may avoid certain jobs or even turn down job opportunities and job promotions because public contact or public speaking will be required.

A person suffering from public speaking anxiety is likely to be concerned about potential embarrassment, and appearing foolish or stupid to others. When confronting the feared situation, whether it is a party or a class discussion, he/she will also experience some of the physical symptoms associated with anxiety, such as trembling, sweating, clammy hands, rapid heart rate, shortness of breath, muscle tension, blushing, confusion or losing one's train of thought, gastrointestinal discomfort, shaky voice, and/or dizziness.

Strategies such as stress management techniques, relaxation exercises, imagery, self-talk, and cognitive restructuring are typically used to reduce public speaking anxiety. Kondo (1994) contends that in general, the remediation of public speaking anxiety has focused on (a) skills training, (b) systematic desensitization, and (c) cognitive modification (Daly & McCroskey, 1984, as cited in Kondo, 1994).

According to Kondo, with skills training it is assumed that the anxious person

lacks skills to give an adequate speech. Training a person in public speaking skills presumably will end the anxiety because he or she is now trained to handle the situation. Systematic desensitization is an attempt to change the negative involuntary association between the public speaking situation and anxiety (Friedrich & Goss, 1984, as cited in Kondo, 1994). After teaching general relaxation techniques, individuals are trained to relax while thinking about public speaking situations. Cognitive modification assumes that the reason for anxiety is negative self-statements or thoughts that inhibit public speaking (Fremouw, 1984, as cited in Kondo, 1994). The individual is trained to substitute those negative self-statements with more adaptive coping statements, thus removing the irrational bases of the anxiety.

CHAPTER 6

Anxiety Management Strategies

In addition to exploring the counterproductive effects of anxiety on language achievement, researchers and instructors should strive towards devising strategies to help learners overcome fears and apprehensions about learning a foreign language in the classroom. Most of the research on language anxiety has offered, directly and indirectly, suggestions for reducing anxiety in the classroom. Young (1991) is among those who have provided such suggestions.

In order to successfully create a low-anxiety classroom environment, Young (1991) first acknowledges the need to examine students' manifestations of anxiety. She cites Leary's (Leary, 1982) social anxiety behavior categories as a base: arousal-mediated responses, disaffiliative behavior, and image-protection behavior. Based on these and other scholars' work (Horwitz, 1988; Bailey, 1983, as cited in Young, 1991), Young suggests ways to reduce anxiety in the classroom setting.

In order to help facilitate a low-anxiety classroom environment, Young suggests that instructors should adopt a friendly and relaxed attitude towards the students (Young, 1991). With students anxious about class performance, Hadley (Young, 1991) recommends not to try putting one student on the spot, not to interrupt them while speaking, to accept students' answers and errors in a warm, nonthreatening fashion, and to reward student's communication of a message. She asserts that such a warm and accepting manner will gain students' trust, and they will

consequently know that they can take risks with the teacher and that they're not going to be penalized in any way (Young, Krashen, Hadley, Terrell, & Rardin, 1992).

Regarding error correction, Young also advises teachers to use approaches that do not provoke anxiety (Young, 1991). Young contends that modeling is the most effective error correction method, yet there is no sufficient empirical support. Hadley (Young *et al.,* 1992) suggests that pointing out correct responses instead of focusing on correcting errors would be more anxiety-reducing. She provides some practical tips, such as finding and teaching appropriate responses and directing students to correct their own work (Young, et al., 1992), and teaching activities that allow for multiple answers rather than one "right" answer, thus increasing flexibility in the classroom. To deal with test anxiety, it may be useful to let students know that oral practices are not going to be construed as a test-like situation, and that it's not going to be counted against them.

Krashen, in his interview with Young (Young *et al.,* 1992), recommends teachers not to force students to speak before they are ready, and not not to ask them to perform beyond their acquired competence (Young, et al., 1992).

Another action teachers may take as noted by Young and others is that they have students work in small groups or pairs (Young, et al., 1992) in speaking and listening. Pair work would especially be helpful for less proficient students, because only having the partner who has the same level of language proficiency in front will provoke less self-consciousness. Having students use self-talk and participate in supplemental instruction and support groups, playing language games in class, or

keeping a journal are also suggested.

Others have proposed dispelling student beliefs about language learning (Horwitz, et al., 1986), sensitizing students to their fears and anxieties associated with language learning (Crookall and Oxford as cited in Horwitz et al., 1991; Foss and Reitzel 1988), tailoring activities to the affective needs of the learners, attempting to focus on topics that interest students and are familiar to them, helping students relax and recover from bad experiences in language classes, by using Suggestopedia, a teaching method that aims to enhance learning by lowering the affective filter of learners. Suggestopedia uses strategies such as relaxation techniques, deep breathing, meditation and music, and having students discuss their feelings with someone else.

The strategies and suggestions made above include methods that researchers and instructors have used and succeeded in reducing anxiety to varying extents. There may be other more useful and valid anxiety-reducing techniques, and further research should be conducted to test the effects.

CHAPTER 7

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The main goal of investigating foreign language anxiety would be to clarify its relationship with learners' performance and achievement in the classroom, thus giving teachers suggestions on how to create a classroom environment that will promote students' competence and elicit optimal results. As it has been proven that excessive foreign language anxiety has a debilitating impact on students' performance and that anxiety is most often evoked by the classroom environment and not by students' innate characteristics, teachers should make an effort to make a classroom environment that is less anxiety-provoking. Dealing with students with high anxiety requires caution on the teachers' part, and they are advised to help lessen students' anxiety by using specific techniques or recommending outside help.

Prior to practicing such techniques however, teachers should most importantly acknowledge that students who have anxiety may not be able to perform to their best abilities. It may be difficult to assess students' actual foreign language abilities, for most language aptitude tests used in the classroom measure the performance. The nature of the language classes make it impossible to eliminate anxiety altogether. Therefore, teachers should be aware of this issue and try to minimize students' anxiety by adopting certain strategies such as not pressuring students to perform in front of their peers such as giving presentations (putting on the spot), getting students to work in small groups rather than as a whole class when

carrying out tasks, familiarizing the students with the tasks sufficiently before evaluating them, and maintaining friendly and relaxed attitude.

In addition, teachers should help students to overcome negative learner characteristics such as low self-perception of their language abilities, erroneous beliefs or fear of negative evaluation which have been defined as some of the main sources of foreign language anxiety. In order to achieve this, teachers could try using strategies such as setting realistic goals and standards for the students by talking to them, giving them positive reinforcement, and having class activities in which students can share their fears and anxieties. An example would be Agony Column which is an effective method in the sense that students can share and to discuss the anxieties among classmates. However, it is entirely possible that students feel anxious by the fact that their personal anxiety would be examined and assessed by their peers in groups. Also, making students to select one speaker from each group to give feedback could also provoke anxiety. Therefore, teachers should carefully select the activities or games in order to successfully create a low-anxiety classroom. With well-chosen activities, teachers can help learners to realize that their symptoms are common. Fear of negative evaluation has generally been found in students who focus on their mistakes. Teachers could reduce this by adopting an attitude that mistakes are part of the learning process and that everyone makes mistakes, and encouraging them to focus less on their mistakes and more on their communicative purposes i.e. conveying their thoughts and ideas.

It would certainly be difficult to address all aspects of the students' anxieties and to eliminate them. Nonetheless, it would be the role of teachers to provide the

best conditions and environment for successful language learning for the students.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This paper sought to put together the literature on the construct of foreign language anxiety. This paper has provided review the history, the development of research on foreign language anxiety and its relationship with the many inseparable variables that exist in the language learning process. I have tried to focus on foreign language speaking anxiety, by synthesizing relevant research and presenting related constructs that help understanding of its construct in more depth.

Foreign language anxiety has always been the subject of my interest. As a English as a Foreign Language learner myself, I have been frustrated numerous times for feeling anxious when performing in English, especially when I had to speak the language. Such frustration and curiosity had inspired me to pursue the study of this phenomenon, in order to clarify its cause and find ways to overcome it.

The realm of foreign language anxiety has been subject to lack of definite conclusions due to its ambiguous nature. However, the fact that foreign language anxiety is a "conceptually distinct variable in foreign language learning" (Horwitz et al. 1986) with symptoms and reactions specific to the language learning context is a widely acknowledged finding. Also, the development of FLCAS by Horwitz et al. is a significant achievement, for this scale provided a foundation for increased consistency among the following studies. The FLCAS and many other measurements devised by Saito et al., MacIntyre and Gardner etc. have it made possible to better understand the sources and effects of anxiety in the foreign language classroom.

It has now been confirmed by many scholars that foreign language anxiety plays a significant role in performance and achievement, and this relationship has been identified by many studies. Although much has been achieved regarding foreign language anxiety, there are still many areas that need further research and clarification. Although correlation between anxiety and performance/achievement has been found to be significant, there are still many variables that cloud their relationship. For example, the complex nature of anxiety makes it difficult to completely separate it from learners' language aptitude when examining its relationship with performance. Perhaps this accounts for the many inconsistencies in the data of related studies.

Therefore, further attempts to successfully rule out the variable of individual differences in language competence are required. In addition, the relationship between global Fl anxiety and specific language skill anxiety needs to be further verified. Also, future research should investigate the contributions made by undefined variables when measuring anxiety at the three stages of the FL learning process. There seems to be many sources of anxiety that remains unexplored, and thus are open to future research.

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